American Policy regarding Export of Military Equipment

†3870. SHRI JANESHWAR MISRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that America intends to transform India into a largest market of military equipment and defence materials and in view thereof the statement made by the US Secretary of State following the successful test of the "Agni" missile it appears that America wants to make India its tool;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that Britain, France and Germany have also condemned India on the tune of America; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Commenting on the flight test of the short-range variant of the Agni-I missile conducted by India on 25 January, 2002, US Secretary of State Colin Powell had stated in a televized interview that "we would have preferred that they had not fired it during this time of tension, but I don't think it escalates things that much more".

(c) The UK and Germany had expressed regret over India's decision to conduct the test 'particularly in the backdrop of current tensions' with Pakistan. France had described India's decision as 'certainly not the most desirable signal in the present regional context'.

(d) Government continues to stress that the aim of its missile programme is to ensure the credibility of India's minimum nuclear deterrent. The flight test was part of the technological evolution of this programme, and the timing was determined solely by technical factors. It had no political significance or relationship to any event.

Help to Nepal to combat Maoist insurgents

3871. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have offered equipment and training to Nepal for combating Maoist insurgents;

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†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, whether the revised extradition treaty between both the countries is going to smash ISI activities in Nepal;

(c) if so, to what extent; and

(d) what other steps both the countries jointly propose to take to check ISI activities in both the countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir. India has strongly condemned the Maoist violence and extended support to the steps taken by Government of Nepal to restore normalcy and order in the country. India has also offered such assistance as is desired by Nepal in addressing the situation.

(b) to (d) In order to strengthen the institutional legal framework between India and Nepal which will make it easier for them to combat crime and terrorism, the two countries have been considering conclusion of an Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance as well as updating the existing Treaty of Extradition. During the recent visit of the Nepalese Prime Minister to India from March 20—25, 2002, the two Prime Ministers stressed the need for early conclusion of these two agreements.

In addition, measures have been taken to enhance co-operation with Nepal, particularly with regard to implementing effective border management. A bilateral institutional mechanism has also been evolved which includes a Joint Working Group on Border Management and Home Secretary Level Talks to jointly address issues relating to maintenance of peace and security and prevention of criminal activities in the India-Nepal border areas. Regular dialogue of customs officials also takes place under the Agreement for Cooperation to control Unauthorised Trade. The Special Service Bureau is being deployed along the border with Nepal to strengthen security in the border areas.